

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA  
WAYCROSS DIVISION

ROBERT EARL DAW,

Plaintiff,

v.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Defendant.

CIVIL ACTION NO.: 5:19-cv-88

**MAGISTRATE JUDGE'S REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Plaintiff is a federal prisoner housed at the Federal Prison Camp in Montgomery, Alabama. Plaintiff filed this action, asserting claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 concerning events that occurred at D. Ray James Correctional Institution in Folkston, Georgia. Doc. 1. This matter is before the Court for a frivolity screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. For the reasons stated below, I **RECOMMEND** the Court **DISMISS** Plaintiff's Complaint in its entirety. Because I have recommended dismissal of all of Plaintiff's claims, I also **RECOMMEND** the Court **DIRECT** the Clerk of Court to **CLOSE** this case and enter the appropriate judgment of dismissal and **DENY** Plaintiff leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* on appeal.

**PLAINTIFF'S CLAIMS<sup>1</sup>**

Plaintiff claims the United States violated his Eighth Amendment right to be free from cruel and unusual punishment. Doc. 1 at 4. Plaintiff states he was placed into a facility that mainly housed "illegal foreign detainees" who spoke Spanish. *Id.* at 2. Plaintiff claims "[t]his

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<sup>1</sup> All allegations set forth here are taken from Plaintiff's Complaint. Doc. 1. During frivolity review under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, "[t]he complaint's factual allegations must be accepted as true." Waldman v. Conway, 871 F.3d 1283, 1289 (11th Cir. 2017).

was essentially like living in a foreign country for 4 ½ months.” Id. Plaintiff further explains he was addicted to opiates and methamphetamine prior to being taken into custody. Id. at 2. Plaintiff claims the United States should have provided him with medical treatment to safely withdraw. Id. at 4. Plaintiff asserts the United States also should have provided him with mental treatment and an environment more conducive to his knee condition. Id. Plaintiff states he had to walk almost five miles per day to eat. Id. at 2–3.

In addition, Plaintiff cites statutory provisions he claims the United States or the Bureau of Prisons violated. Section 4081 of Title 18 of the United States Code states federal correctional facilities should be “planned and limited in size” to “facilitate the development of an integrated system which will assure the proper classification and segregation of Federal prisoners according to the nature of the offenses committed, the character and mental condition of the prisoners, and such other factors . . . .” Plaintiff also cites 18 U.S.C. § 4082 without explaining the statute’s relevance.

### **STANDARD OF REVIEW**

A federal court is required to conduct an initial screening of all complaints filed by prisoners and plaintiffs proceeding *in forma pauperis*. 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915A(a), 1915(a). During the initial screening, the court must identify any cognizable claims in the complaint. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b). Additionally, the court must dismiss the complaint (or any portion of the complaint) that is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or which seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. Id. The pleadings of unrepresented parties are held to a less stringent standard than those drafted by attorneys and, therefore, must be liberally construed. Haines v. Kerner, 404 U.S. 519, 520

(1972). However, Plaintiff's unrepresented status will not excuse mistakes regarding procedural rules. McNeil v. United States, 508 U.S. 106, 113 (1993).

A claim is frivolous under § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i) if it is “without arguable merit either in law or fact.” Napier v. Preslicka, 314 F.3d 528, 531 (11th Cir. 2002) (quoting Bilal v. Driver, 251 F.3d 1346, 1349 (11th Cir. 2001)). In order to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, a complaint must contain “sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to ‘state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.’” Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (quoting Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007)). To state a claim, a complaint must contain “more than labels and conclusions, and a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not” suffice. Twombly, 550 U.S. at 555.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **I. Plaintiff's Claims Against the United States**

Plaintiff identifies the United States as the only Defendant in this case. Plaintiff does not list any individual government employees as Defendants or even allege any wrongful actions specific individuals took. “Absent a waiver, sovereign immunity shields the Federal Government and its agencies from suit.” FDIC v. Meyer, 510 U.S. 471, 475 (1994). Plaintiff has not alleged any applicable waiver of sovereign immunity in his Complaint.

Further, Plaintiff brings this action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Doc. 1 at 1. In order to state a claim for relief under § 1983, a plaintiff must allege that “a person acting under color of state law” committed the act or omission in dispute. Hale v. Tallapoosa County, 50 F.3d 1579, 1582 (11th Cir. 1995). The United States is not a “person,” and Plaintiff has not alleged the United States has taken any actions under color of law. Plaintiff only alleges the United States violated his federal constitutional right to be free from cruel and unusual punishment and federal statutory

provisions at a federal correctional facility. Because Plaintiff sues the federal government, the Court could interpret Plaintiff's Complaint to state a Bivens cause of action.<sup>2</sup> Even so, courts generally apply § 1983 law to Bivens cases because the actions are similar. Abella v. Rubino, 63 F.3d 1063, 1065 (11th Cir. 1995). Regardless, the United States Supreme Court has directly ruled that Bivens does not create a cause of action against the United States or federal government agencies. Meyer, 510 U.S. at 485. Thus, the Court should **DISMISS** Plaintiff's claims.

## II. Leave to Appeal *in Forma Pauperis*

The Court should also deny Plaintiff leave to appeal *in forma pauperis*. Though Plaintiff has not yet filed a notice of appeal, it is proper to address these issues in the Court's order of dismissal. See Fed. R. App. P. 24(a)(3) (trial court may certify that appeal of party proceeding *in forma pauperis* is not taken in good faith "before or after the notice of appeal is filed").

An appeal cannot be taken *in forma pauperis* if the trial court certifies that the appeal is not taken in good faith. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3); Fed. R. App. P. 24(a)(3). Good faith in this context must be judged by an objective standard. Busch v. County of Volusia, 189 F.R.D. 687, 691 (M.D. Fla. 1999). A party does not proceed in good faith when he seeks to advance a frivolous claim or argument. See Coppedge v. United States, 369 U.S. 438, 445 (1962). A claim or argument is frivolous when it appears the factual allegations are clearly baseless or the legal theories are indisputably meritless. Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 327 (1989); Carroll v. Gross, 984 F.2d 392, 393 (11th Cir. 1993). An *in forma pauperis* action is frivolous and not brought in good faith if it is "without arguable merit either in law or fact." Napier v. Preslicka,

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<sup>2</sup> Bivens v. Six Unknown Named Agents of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, 403 U.S. 388 (1971).

314 F.3d 528, 531 (11th Cir. 2002); see also Brown v. United States, Nos. 407CV085, 403CR001, 2009 WL 307872, at \*1–2 (S.D. Ga. Feb. 9, 2009).

Based on the above analysis of Plaintiff's claims, there are no non-frivolous issues to raise on appeal, and an appeal on these claims would not be taken in good faith. Thus, the Court should **DENY** Plaintiff *in forma pauperis* status on appeal.

### **CONCLUSION**

For the reasons set forth above, I **RECOMMEND** the Court **DISMISS** Plaintiff's Complaint in its entirety.

Any objections to this Report and Recommendation shall be filed within 14 days of today's date. Objections shall be specific and in writing. Any objection that the Magistrate Judge failed to address a contention raised in the Complaint must be included. Failure to file timely, written objections will bar any later challenge or review of the Magistrate Judge's factual findings and legal conclusions. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C); Harrigan v. Metro Dade Police Dep't Station #4, No. 17-11264, 2020 WL 6039905, at \*4 (11th Cir. Oct. 13, 2020). To be clear, a party waives all rights to challenge the Magistrate Judge's factual findings and legal conclusions on appeal by failing to file timely, written objections. Harrigan, 2020 WL 6039905, at \*4; 11th Cir. R. 3-1. A copy of the objections must be served upon all other parties to the action.

Upon receipt of Objections meeting the specificity requirement set out above, a United States District Judge will make a de novo determination of those portions of the report, proposed findings, or recommendation to which objection is made and may accept, reject, or modify in whole or in part, the findings or recommendations made by the Magistrate Judge. Objections not meeting the specificity requirement set out above will not be considered by a District Judge. A party may not appeal a Magistrate Judge's report and recommendation directly to the United

States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. Appeals may be made only from a final judgment entered by or at the direction of a District Judge.

**SO REPORTED and RECOMMENDED**, this 30th day of November, 2020.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B. Cheesbro', is written above a horizontal line.

BENJAMIN W. CHEESBRO  
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA